

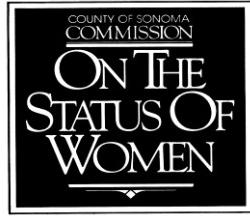
# The Voices of Sonoma County Youth

County of Sonoma  
Junior Commissioner  
Project

2012-2013

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**COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN**  
***Junior Commissioner Project 2012-2013***  
***Monday, April 8, 2013***

**AGENDA**

- |  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>I. Welcome</b>  | Chair     |
| a. Roll Call   | Secretary |
| b. Acknowledgment of Commission Members, Parents, Guests   | Secretary |
| c. Review and Approval of April 8 Junior Commission Meeting Minutes  | Secretary |
| <b>II. Review of Junior Commissioner Projects: Career Panel, Service Project, Women's History Luncheon, Representation Event, CSW Coalition Event</b>  |           |
| <b>III. Junior Commissioner Presentations (in alphabetical order by Junior Commissioner)</b>   |           |
| Junior Commissioners will present their findings from focus groups held on issues affecting young women in Sonoma County. A questions and answer segment will follow the end of the presentations. |           |
| Maria (Lupita) Alamillo – Gender Roles   |           |
| Paige Amormino – Female Student Athletes   |           |
| Morgan Apostle – Teen Feminists  |           |
| Hanna Bauer – Volunteering and Community Service Among Teens   |           |
| Lelaina Beyer – Health Education   |           |
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| Peggy Hsieh – Bullying in High School  |           |
| Angelica Lezama – The Effects of Social Networking on Teenagers  |           |
| Brianne Logasa and Ivy Ziedrich – Adolescent Perception of Rate  |           |
| Michelle Miller & Laura Luttringer – Teen Pregnancy  |           |
| <b>IV. Panel Discussion–Women Political Officials</b>  |           |
| <b>V. Announcements and Closing</b>  | Chair     |
| Board of Supervisors Meeting: Tuesday, April 9, 2013, 8:30 a.m.<br>575 Administration Drive, Room 100A, Santa Rosa   |           |
| <b>VI. Meeting Adjournment</b>   | Chair     |
| <b>VII. Reception</b>  |           |

# **History of the Junior Commissioner Project**

In 1994, the Sonoma County Commission on the Status of Women developed the Junior Commissioner Project as a mentorship project to provide high school youth age 14 to 18 with an introduction to County government as well as an opportunity to enhance leadership skills by observing women leaders in our community. This nationally recognized project serves as a learning experience for high school students regarding issues of women's equity and advocacy. Each year, the project includes a series of activities and projects that allow the Junior Commissioners to:

- Actively participate in County government and take an active role in advocacy;
- Develop communication, facilitation and presentation skills;
- Learn about the issues that impact the lives of women and girls;
- Become empowered to make a positive impact on their communities;
- Foster their leadership skills; and,
- Strengthen their self-esteem.

## **2012-2013 Junior Commissioner Project**

**By: Linda Kay Hale, Paulette Hall, Karlene Rebich,  
and Priscilla Vivio, 2012-2013 Project Co-Chairs**

As part of this County-approved annual leadership program for high school youth, young people from throughout the County gain the opportunity to strengthen their leadership skills, learn more about advocacy and governmental processes, acquire knowledge about issues that impact their lives, and present that information in a formal setting. This year's group had the mission of leading independent focus groups to discuss topics of special interest to the Junior Commissioners.

The year's agenda began with written applications, followed by phone interviews conducted by the Project's Co-Chairs. Those chosen to participate were invited to an extended orientation. During this time, they were able to learn about the Commission and issues affecting young women, and how to conduct a public meeting using Robert's Rules of Order. They created their own guide for conduct and communication, and agreed to use these following guidelines in their interactions:

**Respect Each Other's Opinions ~~Add to the Conversation ~~~  
Take Initiative ~~ Don't be Afraid to Speak Up ~~ Keep Confidentiality  
Make Your Goal to Learn ~~ Be Honest and Original ~~  
Be True to Your Words ~~ Promote the Junior Commissioners and CSW  
Have Fun!!**

On October 8, 2012, the Junior Commissioners took the Oath of Office, making them Officers of the County of Sonoma for the duration of the 2012-2013 Junior Commissioner Project. This group of exceptional young people continued fulfilling their duties in leadership at their own meetings, as well as attending and participating in meetings of the Commission on the Status of Women where they observed Commission business, reported on their own Junior Commission business, and heard from representatives from the community who presented information on locally relevant issues, including Shaylene King of the Mean Girl Extinction Project and Julia Donoho, an attorney and architect. The Junior Commissioners also attended a panel of successful female professionals (below), who shared their experiences as women entering and working in their respective fields.

## ***Career Panelists – February 4, 2013***

- **Detective Brenda Herrington, SR Police Dept.**
- **Helen Rudee, first woman elected to County of Sonoma Board of Supervisors**
- **Jessalyn Nash, Educator and Consultant in Restorative Justice**
- **Dr. Marisha Chilcott**
- **Monica Julian, Attorney with Foster Care System**

## ***Political Panel – April 8, 2013***

**There will be a panel of professional women from an assortment of appointed or elected officials at the meeting who will tell the Junior Commissioners about how they were drawn into public service.**

# Junior Commissioner Projects

In 2010 the Junior Commissioners decided to add a service project to give back to their community. They chose to work with the YWCA and adopted a room at the Safe House (a shelter for victims of domestic violence) where the Junior Commissioners cleaned and decorated a bedroom to make it more inviting to those that need it. This year the Junior Commissioners continued this effort by returning to the YWCA Safe House and refurbishing their adopted room.



*There is always, always , always  
something to be thankful for*

The Junior Commissioners also attended and assisted with several CSW (Commission on the Status of Women) events including: the CSW-hosted Women's History Luncheon "Women Honoring Women," which occurred in March in support of Women's History Month and where the CSW honored women leaders who have contributed to the lives of women in Sonoma County.



The CSW-hosted Coalition meeting which encourages the sharing of resources, volunteers, and distribution lists among county women's organizations. The Juniors attended a CSW dinner where we were all able to get to know one another a little better.

The Junior Commissioners also had the opportunity to meet their elected State representatives and/or their staff in their local offices. As the Junior Commissioners continued to learn about advocacy and organizing, they each held a focus group to collect data about a topic of interest. The Junior Commissioners analyzed their data, summarized their findings and conclusions, and turned their research into formal reports that were reported to their representatives and will be presented this evening. Finally, on April 9, 2013, the Junior Commissioners will be formally recognized by the Board of Supervisors for their work. It's been an excellent year for Sonoma County's Junior Commissioners!

## **Reflecting on Gender Equality**

### **By Lupita Alamilla**

Gender has always been an interesting concept to me. Last December I attended a Student Diversity Leadership Conference, where the participants explored all areas of diversity, including gender. We noted the differences between gender, which is more of a self-identifying concept, and sex, which is biological, based on your body, as well as analyzing some stereotypes assigned to a certain gender. I wanted to see how students at my school reacted to certain aspects concerning gender, too see how some views differed and if there was a need for improvement towards gender equality in our community.

I asked my school's diversity club, with a lot of different students varying from freshmen to seniors. I started off by asking the group of students "What are some qualities society assigns to a certain gender?" I asked for them to list certain qualities and some of the qualities they listed are as followed:

Men:

Strength, assertiveness, and can't show emotions

Women:

Docile, weak, bubbly, cheerful, beautiful, feminine

Hearing these answers, there was a certain consensus for these terms. There were no differing qualities that the students believe society assigns to a certain gender.

The next question I asked was what they thought of society's definitions of each gender? Some students said that the definitions were too rigid and limiting, but others did not feel limited by the definitions. The students agreed that the people of Sonoma County were pretty open to other ideas, and they were "extremely grateful" that they did not live in a more conservative area. The students kept steering the discussion towards women, noting that women's societal gender roles were a lot more prominent than men's gender roles. They also felt that there was a really large spectrum on how prominent gender roles are, depending on the area of focus.

I then asked the students "What are your thoughts on stereotypical jokes such as "women belong in the kitchen? Are they offensive or should they be brushed off?" Here, there was a variety of answers. Some students stated that "they find jokes about anyone extremely offensive" while others thought that the jokes are okay if it is received well from the audience. Some were caught because they said that "most jokes are offensive in some way, and acceptance depends on how open-minded the receiver of the joke is." Others said that "it's only a joke if both people are laughing" and all agreed it was best to be cautious with stereotypical jokes.

Our identity is very important to us; our identity helps define us. I asked the students how important their gender was to them? Was it a key part to defining him or her? There was again a consensus that while your gender is a part of who you are, it should not define you. Gender should not be a box that you have to conform to. I also asked the students if they have personally faced any inequality because of their gender? They were again, thankful to live in an open-minded community where they did not face inequality, yet started to reflect how in other places people treat women

like nothing and women are more vulnerable. When I asked if there was a similar issue for men, they agreed that men did not face as many inequalities, which was interesting to note, considering that the focus group consisted of both young men and women. It was quite interesting to see the students to take on both a local and global perspective on gender equality. They all agreed that they lived in an area that was very open-minded, while they saw how other places in the world there is a stark inequality between genders. Many of these students were aware of these inequalities, due partially to the humanities curriculum and partially from the extracurricular activities they are a part of, such as being in a club with partner schools. The students felt safe in the school environment they were in, and also felt safe in the communities they live in.

## **Female Student-Athletes, a Balance of Priorities**

### **By Paige Amormino**

Since the enactment of Title IX in 1972, the funding for and number of female athletic programs in high schools has increased drastically. In fact, a 2010 study conducted by the University of Michigan concluded that between the years 1990 and 2010, the percentage of female twelfth graders participating in athletic teams increased from 27.9% to 36.0% in the United States. Additionally, the National Federation of State High School Associations released a statistic stating that the number of girls in California's high schools participating in athletic activities was 316,241 in the 2010-2011 school year, which increased to 325,279 female athletes in the 2011-2012 school year.

Now, for the first time in our country's history, female student-athletes are becoming a prevalent and dominate force in the high school community. Consequently, these young women are presented with the challenge of being the trailblazers for female student-athletes for generations to come. Today's young women who are involved in athletics must explore unknown territories and try to solve the struggles which all female student-athletes face. These girls are defining what it means to be a female student-athlete in high school. They are the pioneers. Their frontier: balancing their priorities.

My focus group consisted of twenty-eight girls from the women's basketball program at my high school, Cardinal Newman. A small Catholic school known for its athletic as well as academic achievement, it is located in Santa Rosa, but has students attending that live all over Sonoma County. I surveyed a sample of girls from the freshmen, junior varsity, and varsity teams, and kept their identities anonymous. There were eight freshman team members participating in the focus group, along with nine of the junior varsity players, and eleven of the varsity players.

I began the survey with posing questions concerning the girls' priorities. When questioned whether they would be more likely to miss a practice for academic purposes, or cut short their studying or homework time to attend practice, only 15% answered that they would more likely miss practice for academics, whereas 85% of the girls thought that they would attend practice and cut short their studying. However, when asked whether academics should be a valid excuse to miss practice, an overwhelming 89% agreed while only 11% felt otherwise. Also contrary to the first question, when asked whether the players would be more disappointed with getting a bad grade on a quiz, or not getting to play in a game, 75% replied that they would be more disappointed with a bad quiz grade; only one in four girls said no playtime would be more disappointing.

In analyzing the first set of data, it can be observed that the female student-athletes' actions and tendencies are not consistent with their thoughts and viewpoints. Although the players hold academics in a higher esteem than athletics and regard it as a higher priority, their answers stating that they would more likely sacrifice their academics in order to attend practice are contradictory.

To find out why the girls' actions contradict their beliefs, I asked the group whether teachers and coaches should be more understanding and accommodating to those who miss academics for athletics or vice versa. Half of the girls felt teachers need to be more accommodating of athletics while the other half begged to differ. For coaches, however, an overwhelming 85% of girls felt

coaches need to be more accommodating to students prioritizing academics. The next question directly asked the player whether they had felt pressured by a coach to put athletics before academics; an astonishing 90% of the players responded they had.

By now it had become apparent that coaches, more than teachers, are responsible for the dilemma facing most female student-athletes. Teachers, however, were not completely without blame. Often an athlete is required to leave early from class in order to participate in a sporting event. At other times, students are required to miss practice for academic functions. The group was asked how well the teachers and coaches accommodate student-athletes in these situations. Here neither the teachers nor the coaches fared well. About two-thirds answered that both teachers and coaches provide little or no accommodations in these situations. As a result, student-athletes are penalized by not being allowed to play in games or make up missed assignments when their academic and athletic schedules conflict.

I concluded the survey by asking if the players thought that the coaches and teachers should work together better to accommodate student-athletes. 75% responded that the coaches and teachers could collaborate better in order to make being a student-athlete easier.

The idea of having the teachers and coaches work together highly resonated with the majority for the female student-athletes. The players have had difficulty trying to balance academics and athletics, because when one of these aspects needs more dedication at a given time, the other facet feels disregarded completely.

Female student-athletes have a dilemma concerning their uncertainties with their priorities. As the number of girls who value both their education and their athletics increases each year, so are the tensions between which aspire to hold in higher esteem. Striking a balance between athletics and academics was the female student-athletes' leading concern. Hopefully this focus group has illuminated this issue.

## **What Feminism Means**

### **By Morgan Apostle**

There are many common misconceptions around the topic of feminism today - especially among teenagers. For my project, I decided to discuss the meaning of feminism with girls at my school. First, I picked a focus group of girls that weren't in my school's Women's Discussion Group (essentially, feminism club). Then, I decided to talk with the Women's Discussion Group about the topic. I expected the answers to be drastically different, but to my surprise, a lot stayed standard across the board for almost every girl I talked to. The main problem I encountered is that lots of girls are simply confused about what feminism is, and what a feminist entails.

The answers I got with my first focus group were about the same as I expected. When asked if they considered themselves feminists, they either said no or that yes, they did consider themselves feminists but not "hard-core ones." I puzzled over this. What is a hard-core feminist?

My next question to them was what they think a feminist entails, and a few girls said that a feminist is somebody who goes to protests and strongly believes in equality with men. Part of their definition was specifically going to protests, which I found really interesting. I also asked if they think feminism has a negative connotation in society today. Most of them said yes, it does, and some pointed to men being intimidated as the reason. Others said that they themselves did not find feminists annoying, but that any activist who tries to force their opinions on you can be annoying. There is a negative stereotype of feminists doing this, so I was not surprised by that answer. The most interesting thing was when somebody appeared confused about what feminists believe in. While not one of my original questions, it was part of her answer to my "definition of a feminist" question. She said she was confused about what the definition of a feminist is, because there seems to be so many different levels of feminism. On one hand, there's the feminists who believe females should own their sexuality, and on the other side of the spectrum there's feminists who think women should reject sexuality. Clearly, this is the big difference between feminism and other human rights crusades. There's so many "feminisms" to choose from, and so many different types of feminist. Perhaps this is the reason why there seems to be so many misconceptions around the topic.

Every week, I lead my school's Women's Discussion Group and we talk about women's issues that are close to our hearts. We had talked about many of the questions I presented before, so I expected the answers to be very different. However, they were not all that different. When asked if they considered themselves feminists, many of the girls said not really, because while they believed in women's rights, they were not "hard-core feminists." They did not go to protests, they did not always stand up to sexist jokes when they knew they should, etc. Even in this group, girls seemed to feel unworthy of the title of "feminist." They saw feminists as superwomen, and did not think that they could live up to that standard. It was at this point that I realized that this was a major issue, as well - while there are many negative connotations around being a feminist, there's some overly positive ones, too. We cannot emphasize enough the importance of feminism, but the prototype of "feminist" has somehow been elevated to this unattainable Wonder Woman level. Most teenage girls simply feel unworthy, even girls who I always thought of as feminists. Our examples are Gloria Steinem, Hillary Clinton, Condoleezza Rice, Lilly Ledbetter - women that girls admire very much but

do not see themselves ever becoming. It's safe to assume that if we had more popularized examples of relatable feminism, more teenage girls might think of themselves as feminists.

Another topic brought up by that question was human rights in general. One girl said the reason she did not call herself a feminist was because she strongly believed in human rights for all, and did not want to limit herself to only one area of human rights. Another girl said that she did not like labels, and that we should all just believe in what we believe in. I had never thought of the issue presented in that light before, and it gave me new insight into the topic. Some girls are afraid that if they call themselves a feminist, they will be limiting themselves to one human rights issue only. Although I had never thought of the "label" that way before it is understandable that girls do not want to box themselves in. Truthfully, we are all still growing into ourselves as teenagers. Teenage girls want to explore their beliefs before giving themselves a label. One girl who did call herself a feminist expressed disappointment that feminism is most often considered somehow more illegitimate than other causes. She used the example of racism, and said that leaders of racial equality are praised as heroes (which they are) - but that more often than not, feminism is considered dead and feminists, annoying. This is an interesting point. Why is feminism considered dead? Is it simply because women can vote now? I believe that perhaps there is not enough education on the topic. Perhaps if children were educated as much about feminism as they were on the subjects of other human rights, things would be different. I remember learning about feminism in school as a child. We learned about how women got the vote, and that was it. It is safe to assume that a main problem in perception of feminism today is that many people, including women, limit their scope of the issue because of a lack of popular information.

Clearly, feminism is a very controversial topic. Every girl has a very different opinion and perception of it. From all these separate definition and opinions, we can surmise that the movement has gotten confusing for many girls. But one of the things that make feminism so personal is that there are such differing opinions on the subject - every feminist is different. Perhaps the very thing that makes feminism confusing for many is also what makes it appealing to others.

## **Volunteering and Community Service Among Teens by Hanna Bauer**

As a senior in high school heading for a four-year university, there has been a lot of mounting pressure especially over the past couple years surrounding college applications. In a super-competitive college application process, students must do whatever possible to stand out in their applications. A major influential factor of the college application process is extra-curricular activities. These include all activities outside of school, and to be a competitor, an abundance of diverse extra-curricular activities is a must. Ever since I was young, I have always loved volunteering and giving back to the community, but now that I am in high school, it has gained a new level of significance among students planning on attending a four-year university. However, college admittance should not be the only reason why people choose to be active in their communities.

I thought it was important to look at a larger selection of the student body with educational goals across the spectrum. So, I focused my research and analysis mostly on the underclassmen at my school because their high school careers are just beginning, and it is in the early years when students have to start thinking about their futures and how they want to participate in the community. I held my focus groups in the Lab Biology classes at El Molino High School, which are generally made up of freshmen and sophomores that are at many different educational levels. Along with the two discussions we had, I also had the classes take a survey about how much they volunteer and participate in community service.

Initially, I was very surprised at how many students actually participated in community service. Forty-five percent of the students in these classes did any form of extracurricular activity outside of school. This number seemed shockingly low to me, but after researching some statistics I was reassured. A 2012 Child Trends survey showed that only about 33% of students volunteer at least once a month. The same survey also stated that there is a slight, but significant gender gap, with female students more likely to volunteer than males. This gap did not show in my focus group. A proportionally similar amount of male students were equally as active in their communities as females.

The discussions were focused mostly on people's reasons and incentives to volunteer. Of the students that did participate in extra-curricular activities, most stated that college admissions was a major determining factor, but it wasn't the most important. The most common reasons given were to "help others in need," "gain skills and experience," "explore new interests," and "meet cool new people." Students genuinely enjoyed volunteering, and many of those who did not volunteer wish they could but have conflicts - like jobs, sports, and transportation - preventing them from doing anything. Students felt that community service was worth it because of the experience of helping others, gaining skills, and challenging themselves. Many students also said that their parents were major forms of support because they help with organization, motivation, and transportation. However, without parental support, they also agreed that they would still try to volunteer as much as possible.

As a whole, the results of my focus group investigations were extremely favorable. Of the young people I surveyed at my high school, the amount that engaged in volunteer work was above the national average. Although the college application process tends to push students to be leaders in their communities, it was encouraging that resume-boosting was not the only incentive.

# **Health Education**

## **How Much Do Students Actually Know?**

### **By Lelaina Beyer**

Nutrition is an important part of everyone's lifestyle. Creating smart eating habits as a teen and young adult will result in a life time of healthy decisions. Young children normally eat what their parents serve them but as they grow older, they begin to choose their own food at their school and at home. I held my focus group in the seventh and eighth grade classrooms of St. John's Catholic School (SJS) in Healdsburg and took a survey. The survey was multiple choice and there were thirteen questions. I took the survey before I taught them anything to see how much they knew about what they were eating and why they were eating it.

The classes at SJS were predominately white and from wealthy families with educated parents. My survey included questions about the basic building blocks of a healthy diet, like carbohydrates, proteins, and fats. I asked them what a carbohydrate was and 61% of the students of the students answered it correctly. About 40% of the students said it was just a starch, which is close to the right answer, but still wrong. The correct answer is a starch and sugars. One of the tougher questions was the one asking what fiber is. Majority of the students said it is a protein; the correct answer is an indigestible carbohydrate, which only 36% got right. Some of the students did not even answer the question and instead wrote, "I don't know".

Other questions in my survey were about why your body needs these things. Almost 100% of the students knew that carbohydrates supply energy and protein builds and maintains body mass. That was easy; carbohydrates and proteins are emphasized by every coach and parent. A tougher question was why your body needs fat. A little over half of the students answered correctly, but some answered that your body does not need fat or they did not know why. This is a little concerning. The right kind of fat is an important part of a person's diet. Fat is in all cell membranes, hormones, and enzymes, and it helps with temperature control in the body. Another tough area for the students is why your body needs fiber. Fiber has no nutritional value but most of the students believed that helped your bones and muscle. Fiber does have health benefits though, like flushing out toxins, and less than 30% of the students got this question correct.

The last few questions I asked were about how much of everything your body needs. The answers were pretty scattered between choices. This is concerning because obesity in America comes from eating too much of the bad fats and carbohydrates, like refined sugars. It was interesting though because some of the students said that a person does not even need any fat in their diet. It is true that a person does not need saturated fats and trans fats but unsaturated fat is essential to a nutritious diet. Unsaturated fat is found in avocados and olive oil. Unsaturated fat can also help a person lower their cholesterol. About 75% of the students got the question about how much water they need to drink in a day correct. The answer is a minimum of 64 oz. a day. Some though said that the maximum is 64 oz. Water should be the main fluid that people drink in a day because it is in every cell and it is needed to flush out toxins.

The last question I asked is if a person can get all of these nutrients without meat or dairy products. Over half of the class answered no. I am disappointed by this because the answer is definitely yes. I am in fact a vegan. Some plants and nuts have just as much protein as meat and it has it without the dietary cholesterol. Dietary cholesterol sticks onto artery walls and if enough builds up, a heart attack or a stroke can occur. Meat and dairy products are such an integral part of America's culture but it does not need to be.

I was not able to go in and teach the class like I had intended to do so I made a packet of correct answers and explanations to give to them. I also gave them tips on how to get all of the nutrients they need for a healthy diet. I left my contact information in the packet and I have actually heard from a couple of students who had questions about nutrition.

No one got a perfect score on this survey and so no one is completely knowledgeable about their nutrition. Majority of the students, if not all, have access to healthy food and receive three meals a day. One can assume that children in poorer neighborhoods know even less. I did not receive any nutritional education until I was a freshman in high school at Ursuline. I think Cardinal Newman eliminated the class when the two schools combined and I do not know if any other high schools offer a health class. Nutrition is such an important part of a person's life and bad habits are hard to break. So if a child does not learn how to eat properly at a young age, then chances are that s/he never will eat well. Those habits will then be passed down to their children. If children learn at a young age what to eat and how much to eat then America might become a healthier nation.

# **Behind the Scenes: The Psychology of Teenage Drug and Alcohol Use**

## **By Madeline Dippel**

In the clandestine world of teenage drug and alcohol use lying is a must. Whether it's lying to parents, friends, or on surveys, it's difficult to get teenagers to admit what they're really up to when no one's watching. So in trying to ferret out what goes on behind the scenes in a teenager's life, I had to be careful in how I approached my focus group. Sure, if I only surveyed my friends it would be easy; they'd be honest, but then again my main friend group doesn't have anything to hide. What I really wanted to explore was the psychology behind those teenagers who party it up with alcohol and drugs, and for that I needed to get honest answers from a variety of different people- both users and non-users.

Wracking my brains, I spent a lot of time thinking about who exactly I wanted to test to best explore this subject. Pretty early on, I came to the conclusion that I wanted to test seniors since after four years of high school, seniors are the ones who would be most exposed to the sorts of drugs and alcohol that one can encounter. Seniors would be more likely to have older friends, older siblings and overall more firsthand and secondhand experience with the hidden world of teenage substance abuse. Besides, as a senior myself, it'd be interesting to see where exactly my class stood on the subject of drug and alcohol use.

Once that was decided upon, I looked over my schedule to see which of my senior classes would provide the most unbiased demographics of the school's population. Right off the bat I knew that my four AP classes wouldn't make the cut. Though advanced classes aren't necessarily indicative of lack of substance abuse, I figured that the majority would most likely be clean. Therefore, I turned my attention to my psychology and advocacy classes. Psychology, as an elective, had a nice mix of both primarily AP students and primarily academic students, making it a fairly neutral choice. Similar demographics were present in my advocacy class as well – a mélange of students on all academic levels.

Now rather than conducting a large group discussion which would lead to uncertain results (especially with the presence of a teacher), I decided that an anonymous survey would achieve the most accurate results. However, before handing out the survey, I made sure to explain the parameters of the study. I handed out each test individually and as I handed papers out, I repeated countless times that the survey I was handing out was going to be anonymous. I professed that even I didn't want to see who completed which survey, telling them to fold their papers up and slip them into my collection bag. Because I was of the same peer group as everyone who participated and I told them explicitly that no sort of authority figure would connect the results to them, I was able to establish an essential bond of trust with the participants of the survey. Each person who took the survey conveyed to me in words, a smile, or a glance of the eye that they would do their best to be honest. In fact the majority of participants were excited to take the survey because it took away from a bit of class time, which combined with all the precautions I took, gives me hope that the results I found are as accurate as my participants led me to believe.

As for this survey itself, I kept it short and to the point. There were three yes/ no questions, each followed by a multiple choice question that allowed subjects to circle each condition that applied to their answer to the previous yes/no question. This made the survey easy and impersonal,

hopefully increasing the odds of getting teenagers to respond honestly – a main concern when exploring the reasoning behind drug and alcohol use.

As stated earlier I kept the survey short, asking each participant only three main yes/no questions:

1. Have you ever felt pressured into doing drugs and alcohol?
2. Do you know people who have participated in drug and alcohol use.
3. Have you ever done drugs or alcohol yourself?

These three questions comprised the basic backbone of the survey. In order to delve into the reasons that teenagers resort to substance abuse, I felt it important to first establish how common substance abuse was among teenagers, and how pressured, on average, teenagers felt to engage in such activities. And even just from these three basic questions the results were a bit staggering. In total, 46% of students felt pressured to participate in the recreational use of drugs and alcohol. Of the people who had never done drugs or alcohol 30.76% felt pressured, and of those who had, 66.67% had. This shows that a large part of students are not only exposed to the usage of illegal substances on a regular basis, but that at some point or another most students feel compelled into taking part of such illicit activities. Furthermore, it was interesting to note that 100% of the students who took the survey claimed to know people that participated in drug and alcohol use, and 65% of these students claimed to be users themselves.

Though I wasn't quite expecting such a large volume of students to admit to participating in illicit activities, I was prepared for some somewhat shocking results, which is why I chose to focus on why people choose to engage in such activities, as opposed to just focusing on the number of average users at my high school. Now for this deeper exploration, there were three parts once again. The first explored exactly where this pressure to do drugs and alcohol is coming from. According to the survey, a large part of it, 66% of it came from the students' friend groups. I guess the common saying about choosing your friends wisely is applicable to this situation, since friends appear to be the main source of pressure by a large margin. The second group most likely to pressure someone into using drugs and alcohol, according to this survey, includes older peers and mentors. Through this group's added years and 'wisdom' it was able to pressure around 24% of the people who took this survey. Other than that however, the only remaining sizeable source of such pressure was from the media, accounting for 10% of the pressure students felt. However aside from these results, there were a few added surprises. One participant took advantage of the blank space offered, and stated that his/her mother pressured him/ her into drug and alcohol use, whether inadvertently or intentionally, I can't be sure. Though this is only a single case, I felt that it was relevant and insightful, given the influence that parents have on their children – especially at a young age. It, along with the rest of the results, displays the importance of having good older role models and friends in life to stay away from drugs and alcohol. Yet it should be noted that though peer pressure has an effect, the majority of people still were resistant to peer pressure – even though the much of this pressure came from close friends. This indicates that a large number of students are standing above the influence, something to be admired.

The next portion of the survey dealt with the participant's perceptions of those who used drugs and alcohols. I thought that the perceptions of why their friends and peers abuse substances would be powerful in creating the entire picture of drug and alcohol use. Additionally I thought

these perceptions would serve as an interesting comparison to the users' perceptions of their own consumption of drugs and alcohol. According to the responses provided, students perceive that their peers and friends engage in illicit activities because:

It's fun – 27%

Everyone else is doing it – 17%

It helps them deal with their problems- 17%

It's relaxing – 22%

Curiosity – 17%

In comparison users reported that they use alcohol and drugs themselves because:

It's fun – 43%

Everyone else is doing it – 6%

It helps me deal with my problems – 9%

It's relaxing – 19%

Curiosity – 23 %

The differences and similarities between these two sets of data really caught my attention. There were many more teenagers who reported using 'for fun' than was perceived by both users and non-users alike. Even users only perceived other users to 'use' out of mere amusement 32% of the time, still pretty far off from the 43% they themselves reported. Also interesting was the high numbers of people who thought others did drugs out of peer pressure and to deal with their own psychological and emotional problems. Non users thought around 20% of users used because they had problems, and even users thought that 16% of their friends consumed drugs and alcohol due to other psychological and emotional issues. This indicates that either the users are lying to themselves about their motivations for using, or that the negative connotation drugs have in society makes others think that generally only 'problem' kids do drugs and alcohol. In regards to the disparity between those who reported doing drugs and alcohol to fit in and the number of people who were estimated to use just to fit in, the reasons behind this disparity are just as ambiguous. The difference could stem from the users' dishonesty with themselves, or potentially the fact that people perceive their peers in a negative light, automatically thinking that a lot of substance abusers are just hopping aboard the substance abuse train to feel accepted. In contrast however, the stress and curiosity categories remained generally the same across the board. Though users attributed their using to curiosity more often than was perceived by others, there wasn't a big enough difference for it to be considered a real disparity. This is significant in the fact that it shows that only certain categories warranted a large difference between the outside and internal perceptions of the psychology behind substance abuse. For example, it demonstrates that there may be denial within users themselves – they don't want to see their using as something to cover up their problems or to be accepted by their peers. Instead, they'd want to be seen as doing drugs and alcohol purely for the fun of it, a possible reason why many more reported using for the fun of it, than perceived. However with more neutral reasons like distressing and curiosity, the numbers stay relatively the same.

Besides the differences between the two sets of statistics, I found the answers from alcohol and drug users themselves alone to be quite interesting. Predictably enough there was a large amount of people who reported to do drugs and alcohol out of curiosity and fun, around 66%. I felt like these two are merely exhibitions of normal teenage, rebellious behavior present throughout the ages. Though of course, these could also be regarded as the more 'safe' answers for any participants who could have been in denial about the reasons behind their usage. However the number of users who admitted to using drugs and alcohol because they found it relaxing and a good way to deal with their problems, was a bit more troubling. The fact that 28% of students seek out drugs and alcohol as a way to escape suggests some unfortunate things about today's teenagers. The fact that students feel so stressed out and pressured by school and society that the only way they can relax and deal with their issues is with illicit substances demonstrates a lot about the detrimental effects of society on today's teenagers. Of course teenagers have always turned to drugs and alcohol for a variety of reasons, including these more problematic ones. Regardless, this 28% could be tackled by students, with means other than illicit substances. Counseling, whether peer or professional, would be a better mode for students to deal with their problems. And the same thing could be said for those students who feel the need to do drugs and alcohol in order to relax. I'm not going to attempt to say that I have the answers for how to address these sorts of problems, but at the same time I feel like these are two reasons behind substance abuse that can be remedied. The need for good emotional and psychological health can surely be handled in a safer, healthier way than through usage of drugs and alcohol.

And with that said, I think it's clear that the results of the survey provide a great deal of insight into the hidden world of teenage drug and alcohol use. From the data, it's evident that there are about as many drug and alcohol users as there have ever been, but at the same time, the statistics presented in this paper go much deeper than just the simple number of users versus non-users. The overall reasoning and psychology behind the drug and alcohol use of today's teens has been presented and analyzed in full, providing a picture of what it means to be a teenager exposed to the clandestine world of substance abuse. The reasons are diverse and individualized, but when coupled together, they tell a story about the lives of teenagers and what drugs and alcohol mean to them. Whether for amusement, curiosity, or relaxing, this is the psychology behind the scenes of teenage substance abuse.

## Bullying in High School by Peggy Hsieh

What is bullying? How does it affect teenagers? How can people help? These were the questions I wanted answers to when I began my study on bullying. I became inspired to make bullying my focus group topic after I attended the Sonoma county Coalition of Women's Organizations and I heard Shaylene King speak. Ms. King is the CEO of The Mean Girl Extinction Project. She is trying to promote an anti-bullying campaign, with an emphasis on girl bullying. Her shocking stories about bullying struck me. I realized that even though anti-bullying is often discussed in schools, no significant progress has been made. In school, "Stop bullying," has almost become cliché that I believe the message loses its power.

I am an International Baccalaureate (IB) diploma candidate at my school. This means I take all the higher-level courses, and I only interact with other IB students. As a result, I discovered that I rarely see bullying, so I wanted to know what it was like for people outside my social circle. I conducted my focus group in my IB Theory of Knowledge class because, out of all my classes, it included the greatest variety of students. However, this was a senior-only class. Yet, with only about fifteen students in the class, we were all comfortable with each other, which led to more discussion; the discussion felt more like a community therapy session. During my discussion, a friend of mine took notes along with me. My focus group spanned over three class periods.

Coincidentally, my school had a cyber-bullying assembly the week before I held my focus group discussion. I did not attend it because it was not mandatory. Thus, I began my discussion by asking my classmates what happened at the assembly. According to them, there were bullying stories, a demonstration, an activity, and a lottery. Also, there were banners with words on them such as "diversity." To my surprise, the overall attitude towards this assembly was negative. They told me the entire assembly was unhelpful. First, they criticized the activity of grouping everyone together. The purpose of that activity was to break up cliques and prove that people in other cliques are not that different. However, my classmates thought the categories did not support their anti-bullying message. Instead of forming groups with the same hair color, they thought the hosts should have said, "Get in a group if you have had a loved one die." Yet, that may have been a sensitive topic. This links to another problem my classmates discussed. Bullying assemblies are ineffective because the population is too large, it is highly informal, and people feel uncomfortable. They suggested that they should be replaced by classroom discussions with plenty of personal interaction. Ironically, they stated that bullying took place during the assembly. Apparently, people were afraid to participate out of fear of being judged by the entire school; their actions could lead to future bullying. Lastly, my classmates thought the lottery took away the anti-bullying message. Instead, it gave the impression of, "Don't be a bully and win prizes!" Overall, an effective method for dealing with bullying would be mini bullying discussions in smaller groups.

Next, I asked them what bullying is like at Montgomery. They claimed a low percentage of bullying occurs at school. Most bullying takes place outside of school or on the internet. They shared various forms of bullying. This ranged from loud whispering to loud insulting comments. Furthermore, they distinguished between cyber-bullying and bullying at school. They thought cyber-bullying was much more common because it is easier to type out hurtful comments without confronting anyone. In fact, cyber-bullying adds on to bullying at school. Furthermore, they added that people may not stand up for themselves or others out of fear of getting in trouble. They

thought if the school could guarantee there would be no negative consequences for responding to the bullying, more people would take a stand.

However, bullying and cyber-bullying are both discreet now. This “modern form of bullying” is difficult to identify. Is it bullying and joking? Bullying or overreaction? Bullying or girl drama? Unfortunately, we were unable to come up with clear definitive answers. In fact, we realized that even bullies do not always recognize that they are bullying someone. Outright bullying (with physical violence) is rare at our school. On the other hand, one classmate shared a story about how her little brother was bullied in elementary school. To everyone’s surprise, she began crying as she described it. She thought bullying in elementary school was an enormous problem because children are easily hurt. Furthermore, children do not try to mask their meanness. My classmates all agreed that anti-bullying education should target young children because they are easily swayed. Moreover, my classmates explained that kids are losing respect for elders, leading to a loss of respect for peers. In addition, video games, social media, and mass media can contribute to bullying behavior.

Then the discussion turned to the application of theory of knowledge ideas. We determined that in order to recognize bullying, reasoning and emotion are the best judges. For instance, a person could mistake a misunderstanding as bullying; a person’s emotions can be flawed and cause overreaction. However, if someone’s comment makes one feel terrible, then the only person who can recognize the bullying is that person that feels it. In addition, sometimes a best friend or family member could recognize bullying because bullying emotionally affects the bullied person’s loved ones too. An example of this is my classmate that cried when she described how her brother was bullied.

Lastly, we discussed signs that someone is being bullied and other bullying statistics. I researched information of both and asked my classmates for their thoughts and opinions. They said that those signs, such as “declining interest in school or after school activities,” could indicate other problems. They concluded that bullying is a wide category that takes different forms. Every case is unique and no list can cover it. They even said, “It is not even productive to try to come up with a list.”

After I conducted my focus group, I did a mini survey on badminton team players and my IB Biology II class. In total, I surveyed 16 girls and 7 boys. 13 were juniors and 10 were seniors. Besides asking for their gender and grade, I had two other questions. For one, I asked them to rank 9 possible causes of bullying I found on the internet in order of most likely cause to least likely cause. The nine were: diet/weight, video games, war/violence around you, domestic abuse/neglectful parents, school policies, anger management, previously victimized, racism, and other. My second question was “Have you ever bullied someone and why?” Then I compared boys’ and girls’ answers. Interestingly, boys thought the most likely causes were racism and previously victimized, while girls thought they were domestic abuse/neglectful parents and previously victimized. Both agreed that diet/weight was another likely cause. Also, school policies were the least likely cause, suggesting that schools effectively discourage bullying. They thought war/violence around them was an unlikely cause too. Next, 3 boys and 8 girls claimed they never bullied anyone. The remaining people all had varying reasons, including peer pressure, fun, jealousy, and revenge. Overall, the results could suggest areas to focus on to prevent bullying.

Lastly, I began further research on bullying with the help of my classmates. I discovered many other anti-bullying efforts. This includes the To This Day Project's video on YouTube (an animated poem explaining the negative effects of bullying) and the movie *Bully* (recently released). The video game "Bully" by Rockstar Games was interesting; the player is a "troubled schoolboy" that must confront bullying from other kids and teachers. However, I am not sure a video game is effective in condemning bullying or promoting vengeance.

To conclude, bullying at Montgomery is not an enormous problem. Bullying nowadays is subtle and difficult to recognize. It mostly occurs outside of our school on the internet. There is no simple solution, but close interactions between teachers and students could help. Through my discussion, I realized that bullying is something high school students need to talk about, but they never had the opportunity. I had initially planned for a half hour discussion, but my classmates talked so much it became a three hour discussion. They even helped me with my research and actively participated in my discussion. Yet, even though some consider bullying an overly discussed topic, it has not been resolved. Overall, bullying is a problem that needs to be confronted, not ignored or brushed aside.

# **The Effects of Social Networking on Teenagers**

## **By Angelica Lezama**

In today's society Facebook is the dominant social network in the world with over 850 million users who use it to connect with friends, advertise, or to play games. Although many teens in the community find this type of social network undisruptive, it can be very harmful if not used in the correct ways. The main reason why I chose to do my focus group on how social networks affect teenagers is because in the previous months two friends my got into an argument because of a post on Facebook. This led them to be suspended from school for about four days. The issues didn't end there. When they were at home they would send disrespectful messages and hurt each other emotionally. Unfortunately to this day they haven't spoken to each other since. Another reason why I wanted to know my peers' perspective on this issue is because from my experience Facebook is an addicting and risky environment, not only did my grades decrease while being on this social network, but I was also encountering by men that were older than me sending me improper messages.

When I conducted a survey in a room of thirty two students from all grade levels it was proven that Facebook is the most common social network being used by my peers. Another aspect that astonished me was the time teenagers spent on Facebook rather than doing productive activities. On average a teen girl spends 3 hours a day and a teen boy spends 2 hours a day, not including the weekend on Facebook. When I posed the question, "Would you accept an individual's friend request even if you don't know anything about him/her?" The majority of the freshman and sophomore students answered yes. One of the boys said, "It depends on the pictures," meaning that teenagers are accepting people based on their physical appearance. It surprised me that the junior and senior girls said they wouldn't accept them unless they "knew more information about them." Although this response sounded settled it's still harmful making a decision to create a "friendship" based on age, location, and work place.

One of the last things discussed in the focus group was their willingness to deactivate their Facebook account in order to stay safe and actually have more time to focus on some other activities such as practicing a sport or finishing their homework early. Most of their responses were, "No, it's too hard". In this moment I realized that most of my peers felt that if they were off of a social network they were being isolated from society, it was taking away their voice!

Overall the main issues that teens deal with when being exposed to social networks are spending too much time and being harmed emotionally by texts coming from other students. I think teens should be educated about safety in social networks. Although there is a page on Facebook which guides you through the steps that users can take to be safe on Facebook, many teenagers don't take the time to even read them and ignore the fact that they can have healthy relationships and make Facebook a more pleasant experience for all.

## **Teenage Pregnancy**

### **By Michelle Miller and Laura Luttringer**

For our focus group, we decided to tackle the controversial topic that is teen pregnancy and teen mothers. Understanding that it is a very sensitive issue, we figured that the only class we could interview was our AP Language and Composition class because they were the only group that could handle the discussion and answer honestly.

We first had them answer an eight-question survey, asking their age and gender and various questions that we thought were impertinent to the topic. We compared the answers of boys, the answers of girls and the overall responses.

Our age group ranged from fifteen to seventeen-years-old, and there were thirteen boys and fifteen girls. We asked:

1. Do you think Teen Pregnancy is an issue?

Male results: 92% said YES

Female results: 87% said YES

Overall results: 93% said YES

2. Are teenagers adequately informed on Safe Sex?

Male results: 100% said YES

Female results: 60% said YES

Overall results: 88% said YES

3. Should Birth Control be available to everyone?

Male results: 100% said YES

Female results: 100% said YES

Overall results: 100% said YES

4. Should Abortion be available to everyone?

Male results: 54% said YES

Female results: 93% said YES

Overall results: 75% said YES

5. Does our Society do enough for Teen Mothers?

Male results: 31% said YES

Female results: 60% said YES

Overall results: 46% said YES

6. Do you think Teen Mothers get enough respect from our Society?

Male results: 100% said NO

Female results: 87% said NO

Overall results: 92% said NO

We thought this data was interesting even though it pretty much was what we expected, with a few surprises. We were very taken aback when we noticed that only 31% of males thought that teen mothers got enough support from society versus the 60% of females. Also we were surprised by the fact that there were two females who believed that young moms were given enough respect from society. If anyone was going to answer "yes" to that question, we expected that the males would answer, seeing that females would normally be more sympathetic to fellow women.

There were also a few very predictable answers from the survey. Overall 100% of the group supported birth control being available to everyone. But the males were almost split over abortion, whereas the females strongly favored having that choice.

After the survey, we, as a class, discussed many aspects of teen pregnancy, especially the influence the media has over society's perception of teen mothers. Television shows such as "Teen Mom" and "Sixteen & Pregnant" were a very debated topic; some people said these shows glorify teen pregnancy, putting these girls on the "famous" platform on their own reality show, and others thought that it reflected negatively on their cast members, showing how screwed up their lives actually are. But we eventually came to the conclusion that the media presents a completely skewed view of what parenting as a teenager is like. As one student put it, "the producers simply show the exciting parts of the girl's lives, and they choose girls based off of whether or not they are "interesting"; they are trying to get as many viewers as possible. Girls who are drug addicts are going to be more entertaining than a normal girl whose parents forced her to keep the baby". We thought that this was a really good point, and realized that this notion needs to be kept in mind when viewing the show. This also brought up the issue that there is a possibility that young girls have unprotected sexual intercourse so they can be on a television program and "get famous". Everyone in our class agreed that this was a disgusting way to become known, and that it is horribly sad to know someone who would put themselves through that just for money and attention.

This led to the question of why adolescent girls wish to attract such negative attention, and how do they get away with it. Most people blamed the over-sexualization of children in (of course) the media. Pre-pubescent girls are now being offered extremely padded bras and thong underwear. Appalled, we thought that children want to be more grown up, and now with television dramas and reality shows (where it seems that at least one teenage girl has to get pregnant at one point) they are called to be sexy and attractive. Twelve-year-old girls want to be sexually appealing, even though they hardly understand what sex actually is. For example, one of our classmates gave the example of her thirteen-year-old neighbor who walks her dog in a sports bra and spandex shorts, but only when the house of college-aged men down the street is out on the driveway fixing motorcycles. This child is trying to get attention from adult males, who, in fact, most likely don't find her attractive at all. This is disgusting behavior, and children should not be allowed to exhibit it.

Conclusively, our class decided that the greatest thing America could do for our youth is to stop sexualizing young women and remove teen pregnancy from television, or at least develop the option of abortion or adoption. We need to educate students more thoroughly on safe sex, and the options there are if one does become pregnant. Teen Pregnancy is an issue that is far too prevalent and far too glorified by our media, making it so much different than it actually is.

## **Adolescent Perceptions of Rape**

### **By Ivy Ziedrich and Brianne Logasa**

The feminist movement originated from the brilliant idea that women are not canvases to improve as we age, objects or plot devices in the grander scheme of the male world, or conquests of any kind. Feminists fought for the legal rights that all women now benefit from in the U.S., and though the battle is not over, life has improved. It was the recognition that improvements must still be made that led to JFK's creation of the Presidential Commission of the Status of Women, and later, similar commissions in the UN, abroad, and even here in Sonoma County.

A 1978 study with over 400 Los Angeles 14-18 year-old teenagers asked the following question:

"Under what circumstances is it OK for a guy to hold a girl down and force her to have sexual intercourse?" 72% of respondents initially said it would be unacceptable under any circumstances, but when presented with specific scenarios in which the woman refuses to have sex, a mere 21% of teenagers responded in the same manner. (Goodchilds and Zellman 1984).

Another study from 1988 of 1700 11-14 year-olds saw that 76% of the boys and 56% of the girls believed that forced sex is acceptable under some circumstances, including scenarios in which the man spent a lot of money on the woman, the man and woman were married, they had been dating for a period of time, etc. (Parrot, Andrea, and Laurie Bechhofer. Acquaintance Rape: The Hidden Crime.)

Both of these studies suggest a common conclusion: rape is still seen as acceptable. What each study also suggests is that it's accepted even by those who claim to believe otherwise and more so by boys than girls. Because of the social progress made since these original surveys, we modeled our study after them both with a goal to evaluate the progress made by our predecessors in the fight for equality and to gauge the battle left to us.

In a survey of 524 high school students of ages 15 and 16, we asked the following questions:

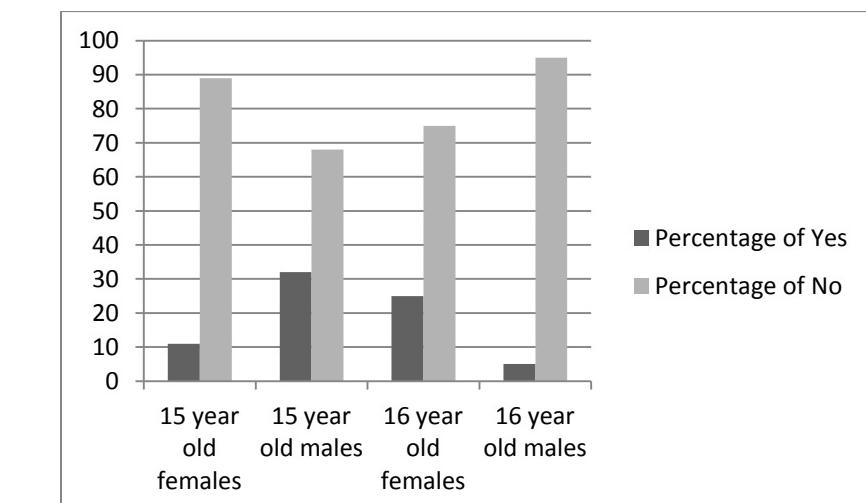
1. Is it acceptable for a guy to hold a girl down and force her to have sexual intercourse? (Yes / No)
2. Under which of the following circumstances is it okay for a guy to hold a girl down and force her to have sexual intercourse? (Circle)
  - a. If the man spent a lot of money on the woman
  - b. If the woman "led him on"
  - c. If the woman sexually excited the man
  - d. If the woman has had past sexual experience
  - e. If the man and woman have been dating for more than six months
  - f. If the man and woman are married
3. Under what other circumstances is it okay for a guy to hold a girl down and force her to have sexual intercourse? (Short reply)

In our analysis of the data, we stratified the results by age and gender, which illuminated several key points of interest.

Question	Response	15 y/o girls	15 y/o boys	16 y/o girls	16 y/o boys
<b>Q1</b>	Yes	0	3	0	6
	No	100	97	100	94
<b>Q2</b>	a	2	3	0	0
	b	4	14	14	11
	c	0	5	4	0
	d	0	0	0	5
	e	2	8	7	5
	f	11	32	25	5
<b>Q3</b>	Other	4	8	0	5
<b>Any circumstance circled or listed</b>		<b>15</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>17</b>

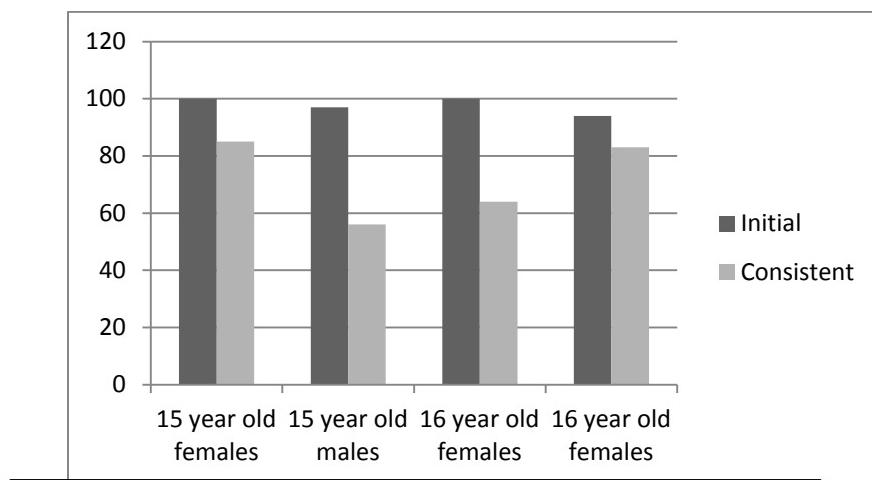
While each scenario was found acceptable by at least 2% of any given group, the most frequently validated circumstance of rape was in a marital context. Until 1976, marital rape was in fact legal in every state of the U.S. Burgeoning progressive domestic social policy has changed that reality. However, even despite the classification of marital rape as an international crime in accordance to the U.N. General Assembly, many states do not consider marital rape as a serious crime. Neither do high school students, as our data clearly exposed. In fact, 32% of 15 year old boys found marital rape to be an acceptable activity.

Figure 1: Is it okay for a guy to hold a girl down and force her to have sexual intercourse if the man and woman are married?



Also interesting—and rather telling of the social climate in which teens are cultured—were our findings of inconsistency between the subjects' initial responses regarding the acceptability of rape in general and their later, contrary responses, when approached with specific scenarios. The presence of inconsistency at all points to one conclusion: while students are told that "rape is wrong," the reality of those words is oftentimes misunderstood or ignored. With that in mind, students proceed to regurgitate the message that "rape is wrong," yet later admit that may not be the case. Whether this stems from a misunderstanding of the definition of rape or rather, the consequences and impacts of it, the result is the same: the presence of rapists in our society. The inconsistencies of the sample size as a whole were not as incredible as those in the 1978 study which we modeled this portion of our study after; however, our stratification of the data by age and gender suggested broader societal issues regarding sexuality and rape.

Figure 2: % age of preliminary responses that rape is never acceptable vs. Consistent refusal to list acceptable circumstances



In 15 year-olds, girls were less likely than boys to change their answers or to justify any given scenario of rape at all. This makes sense, as girls are more often subjects of rape and better relate to the experience and consequences of it. However, this trend reversed itself in the group of 16 year-olds. While boys were more likely at a younger age to deem instances of rape acceptable, girls were more likely to do so at an older age.

These conclusions are hardly surprising given the way that many aspects of society, especially media, treat female bodies as a public commodity—girls begin to believe that such treatment is not just acceptable, but advantageous. When one is cultured to believe that sexuality is the strongest determinant of social worth, a strong sense of self-ownership is assumed to be unattractive and ultimately, a poor strategy in raising one's social standing, which is the primary goal of much adolescent behavior.

In addressing the persistent issue of rape as an ongoing struggle in society, education is an essential tool to debunk misconceptions about rape, but we must also look to the socialization of our teens in America. The harmful images and perceptions of self-worth that society impresses upon individuals through objectification, underrepresentation and political subjugation have tangible consequences that not only endanger the female gender, but individual students walking the halls of their schools.

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